

Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out The Rolling Stones In Concert

The Covers That Never Were

It's November 11, 1969 and the occasion is the 'First Annual West Palm Beach International Music and Arts Festival.' Booked as the final act of a weekend festival that was supposed to be South Florida's Woodstock, the Stones showed up ten hours late. At 4 AM it was pitch black and really cold. Fans were burning trees, fences, bleachers, anything to keep warm. After playing to packed houses, only a few thousand people remained. That is when Stones photographer Ethan Russell snapped the shot he thought should be the cover of the Stones live album. Russell captured a shot he, "...thought was stunning: a photograph of Mick from the outdoor West Palm Beach concert, where it had been freezing. It showed Mick's visible breath swirling as the red and black cape he wore then and again, famously, at Altamont, also swirled, somehow an elegant shot, a ball of frenetic motion frozen in time, white and blue frosted light from one of Chip Monck's spots arcing in from the edge of the frame. I thought it was beautiful." That was but one of the Ya-Ya's covers you never saw.

After the 1969 tour, while still in the US, Russell assembled the photos he took and tried them out for friends. He projected the slides as he played "Gimme Shelter" in the background. They all thought them wonderful. Back in London he made the same presentation at Mick Jagger's house on Cheyne Walk. The lights were turned out and six-foot photos appeared at the screen. Silence greeted the end of the presentation. Jagger broke the silence with the question, "Is that all you have?"

Russell takes up the story, "Mick and I huddled together to discuss what might make a cover,



and Mick suggests his suitcase, a good idea. So, it's given to me along with his passport and various odds and ends and I take it to the studio where I pile one item on top of another in front of an 8 x 10 view camera, like Ansel Adams. In the arranging of the items I, with John Kosh the designer, placed a carefully rolled joint in the brim of Mick's red and white American flag hat, no doubt giggling as we did so. But why wouldn't we?"

Once again Russell appeared before Jagger to show him the photo. In a pained voice Jagger asks, “Didn’t you shoot any without the joint?” Russell hadn’t and the invention of Photoshop was years off in the future. So, you never saw this cover of Ya-Ya’s either.

On February 8, 1970 photographer Michael Berkofsky did a photo session on the M5 motorway starring Charlie Watts and a donkey. The weather was perfectly wretched that day, so you never saw photos like those below on the cover.



David Bailey reshot the cover photos on June 7, finally succeeding in producing the cover we have come to know. Designer John Kosh was paid around £1000 for his work on the project. The story of this cover is the story of Michael Berkofsky, John Kosh, David Bailey, Ethan Russell, Domanique Tarle, Steven Thomas, and The Rolling Stones.

The Urban Dictionary and Blind Boy Fuller

Margotin and Guesdon asked the question, what is the true meaning of this somewhat abstruse title, Get Yer Ya-Ya’s Out? In some of the finest creative writing you could hope to find they

offer some answers. The first is probably “straight from the donkey’s ass” then they offer that it is equally likely to mean the exposing of the male organ, according to Jagger himself. A third possibility is that the phrase could be a voodoo expression meaning “to cast out the devil from

someone’s body.” Someone else suggested it was a simple misunderstanding of ta-tas, for women’s breasts.

Curious? The Urban Dictionary entry “Ya-yas, to get out” is said to mean “to indulge/vent an urge that society does not approve of -- this can be fighting, partying, drinking, having sex, smoking pot... whatever. It implies that there are other times when you're a "respectable citizen" and repress the urge -- full-time party-animals are not getting their ya-yas out because they always act that way. Example for ya-yas, to get out: "I have people flipping me off all the time but because I'm from New York, I get my ya-yas out that way and I get to flip 'em back."

The more likely story is that the title was a tribute nod in the direction of a song by American blues guitarist Blind Boy Fuller. Born a fully-sighted Fulton Allen in North Carolina in 1908, he became partially sighted at 18 and fully blind by the time he was 20. He first recorded in July 1935 and his repertoire included a number of popular double-entendre "hokum" songs. A hokum song is a humorous song that uses extended analogies or euphemistic terms to make sexual innuendos.

One of them was "Get Your Yas Yas Out" recorded on October 29, 1938 in Columbia, South Carolina.

The lyrics have been interpreted to mean 'to blow off steam', 'get the energy out'. It is mostly used as a slang term for having sex, where *Ya-Ya's* are women's breasts. The t-shirt Watts wore on the final version of the cover shows a picture of a woman’s breasts, perhaps validating the Fuller/Urban Dictionary meaning of the title. We all know what it is to just have to get your ya-ya’s out every now and then.

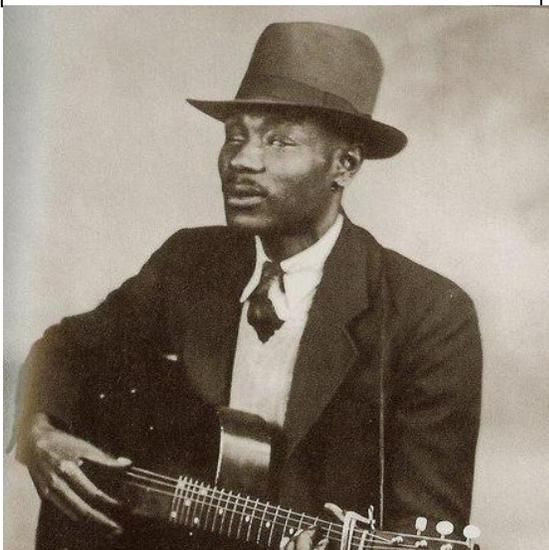
Now you have to leave my house this morning
Don't I'll throw your yas yas out O' door
Here you come, raising hell
Know what you been doin' by the way you smell
Now you got to leave my house this morning
Don't I'll throw your yas yas out O' door

Now you have to leave my house this morning
Don't I'll throw your yas yas out O' door
Here you come, raising sand
Know what you been doin' by the way you stand
Now you got to leave my house this morning
Don't I'll throw your yas yas out O'
... I mean, yas yas out O' door

Now you got to leave my house this morning
Yas yas out O' door
Now you got to leave my house this morning
Don't I'll throw your yas yas out O' door
Look at you drinking, went right through your head
Had to drink a belt before you went to bed
Now you got to leave my house this morning
Don't I'll throw your yas yas out O' door
I mean, yas yas out O' door

Now you got to leave my house this morning
Don't I'll throw your yas yas out O' door
Now you got to leave my house this morning
Don't I'll throw your yas yas out O' door
Oh zee zah, be dum bum
Batta batta batta, dado zam
Now you got to leave my house this morning
Throw your yas yas out O' door

Blind Boy Fuller’s “Get Your Yas Yas Out”



On Jack's Back



On Sunday, February 8, 1970 Jagger and Watts joined photographer Michael Berkofsky and his assistants for a photo session on the M6 motorway. This photography session is depicted in the Maysles brothers documentary *Gimme Shelter*, it is also the source of the above set of four photos of Charlie Watts. They stopped near the M5 The South West Birmingham and West Bromwich exit more or less adjacent to the Bescot Rail Depot and emptied out onto the

motorway in a perfectly miserable rain where the RAC building now stands. Jagger and Watts both complained of the cold. Traffic, had there been any, would have been blocked by the three cars they arrived in.

The photo shoot documentary begins with Jack the donkey and Watts dressed nominally as a knight. He wears a long black sleeved shirt, red pants, red socks and black shoes with a full length white hooded cloak, and a knight's helmet with a raised face visor (top left, page 2 above). Anachronistically, Watts holds a flintlock rifle in his right hand as he rides a donkey. There are no musical instruments involved in this shoot but guitar cases can be seen in the road in the background. Watts rides toward the photo crew as they snap and film away.

After the initial photos, Watts and Jagger switch cloaks. Now Watts wears a black hooded cloak and Jagger wears the white one. The flintlock is replaced with a sword. Watts holds the curved sword over his head in his best Saracen imitation. A single guitar case rests against the donkey. Jagger decides to add a second guitar case then moments later says the guitar cases spoiled the whole thing so he removes them both.

The final scene is Charlie in a contemporary rain coat, likely a London Fog. He walks in front of the donkey with two guitar cases and a drum and a drum head in his hands. He has donned Mick's Uncle Sam hat and a red scarf, apparently borrowed from one of the photo crew assistants. One of these photos has been frequently seen on the internet, so one might speculate that it might have been a cover candidate at one point, but none of these photos will do.



Back on Jack

Jagger was not satisfied with the candidate cover images. One hundred and nineteen days later they would try again to capture an image for the album cover. This time David Bailey would do the shoot. Bailey knew Mick Jagger from the Stones' earliest days in London. Jagger was dating Chrissie Shrimpton while Bailey was engaged to her supermodel sister Jean Shrimpton. Bailey was essentially the Stones unofficial photographer.

So, on Monday June 8, Bailey, Watts, Jack and a crew of assistants headed out to an aerodrome near where Watts once lived. A reproduction of the Ya-Ya's shoot was prepared for the traveling Stones museum that was Exhibitionism. Watts describes the shoot in a rare, for him, video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8h97ROqaDp0>).

He takes up the story of the shoot, "(We're) trying to recreate the album cover for the exhibition, except you won't have me leaping about, I don't think. It was David Bailey who we worked with a lot in those days. I went to this place near where I was, used to live, which is Hendon, and it was on an air runway, plane runway, runway at an aerodrome. They brought the donkey along, put a drum on it, had me dressed up, well actually I was in my stage clothes and borrowed Mick's hat in one of 'em. I don't know if they used all that and David was up a ladder shooting down and on the floor shooting up, that's about it."

The Hendon Aerodrome closed in 1968 making it an ideal site for the 1970 shoot. Watts climbed back onto Jack's back then leapt and pranced gleefully for the camera before a backdrop of a flat countryside landscape while Bailey snapped away at the abandoned military airport. Watts wore Mick's Uncle Sam top hat, white pants, a white T-shirt with a picture of women's breasts on it and white socks with no shoes. He has an electric guitar in either hand.

The photo below left is from the Bailey shoot, the photo below right captures that shoot for Exhibitionism. Jack is bearing what looks like Bill Wyman's bass but it is a six-string guitar with only four strings. In the photo on the right Charlie appears to be carrying Wyman's teardrop Vox bass in his right hand. Instrument identification is better left to those more qualified to do it.



The Cover

GYYYO was originally going to be a double album. It would have included tracks recorded by opening acts BB King and Tina Turner. Jagger said "Decca weren't interested. Who is BB King? Who are these people? They asked. They just didn't know who these acts were. So, in the end I gave it all up 'cause it just wasn't worth carryin' on with." That decision robbed us of a gatefold that would never be.

The cover is said, by some, to depict many layers of inside jokes. Watts jumps in the air like the band's front man, perhaps propelled by the magical powers of Mick's Uncle Sam stage hat. He has corralled and controlled his bandmates instruments. Behind him, Jack the donkey, foreshadowing *Some Girls'* "Beast of Burden," carries one of the guitars, Watts' Gretsch bass drum and a floor tom-tom as he peers indifferently at the leaping Watts. The photo above left shows Jack's neck is adorned with a pair of binoculars a camera case and bells. This is a reference to the jewels and binoculars hanging from the neck of a mule in Dylan's song "Visions of Johanna."

"Inside the museums, Infinity goes up on trial
Voices echo this is what salvation must be like after
a while
But Mona Lisa musta had the highway blues
You can tell by the way she smiles
See the primitive wallflower freeze
When the jelly-faced women all sneeze
Hear the one with the mustache say, "Jeez, I can't
find my knees"
Oh, jewels and binoculars hang from the head of
the mule
But these visions of Johanna, they make it all seem
so cruel!"

4th stanza of Dylan's Visions of Johanna



Aural Images

Not all the lasting images from this live album are visuals. GYYYO is unique for the audio images it has burned into our brains. This was Mick's patter between songs and a couple of fan comments that have become famous among Stones fans. It begins as the album opens, before JF: Multiple introductions that end with the intro line that first made it official for fans who had never seen the band in concert, "the greatest rock and roll band in the world, the Rolling Stones." Before Carol: "Oh yeah thank you kindly. I think I busted a button on my trousers hope they don't fall down. You don't want my trousers to fall down now do you?" Before Stray Cat Blues: "Thank you." Before Love in Vain: "Well all right." During Midnight Rambler: a fan repeats "God damn...God damn." Before Sympathy: the Stones most famous recorded fan entreats "Paint it black. Paint it black, Paint it black you devil. Paint it black." Before Live With Me: "Well all right, having a good time?" Before Queenie: "Aw New York City you talk a lot, let's have a look at you." Before HTW: "Well all right, well all right, well all right (feedback), whoo,

well all right. Charlie's good tonight innny he." Before SFM: "We're gonna do one more and we're gonna go." These comments are not part of the music but they stand out as vividly as any of the visual images of the album cover.

Rear Cover

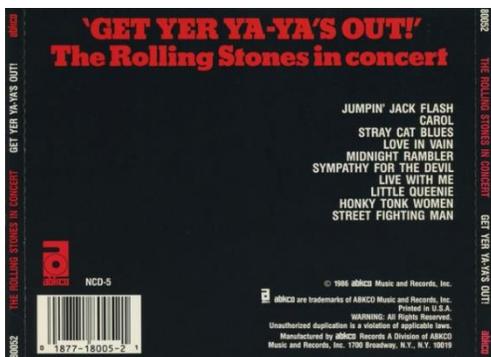
If David Bailey was not the unofficial photographer for the Stones then Ethan Russell was. He followed the Stones on their 1969 tour of the US and presented a number of shots to Jagger upon his return to London, Jagger chose a number of them for use on the back of the cover. He gave them to Steven Thomas with the challenge to arrange them. All those photos are Russell's with the exception of Keith in the lower left-hand corner, which is credited to Domonique Tarle.

Let 6Thomas tell the story of the back cover. "I was asked one Friday afternoon by Trevor ????? of the Stones office if I could layout, design and artwork the rear cover by Monday lunchtime - an arduous task, but obviously do-able. I had previously been commissioned by Trevor to come up with some design thoughts for the Stones own label - prior to John Kosh's successful submission of the tongue logo. Mick didn't hand hand me any photos - Trevor gave me a very few black and white shots along with the six colour transparencies which were used - it was all the Stones' office had. They were all taken by Ethan Russell. In fact, due to having so few images, I was forced to use the colour tranni of Jagger (back view with crowd) transposing it into black and white as the overall background to the design."

Thomas had no leeway in choosing the photos to go on the rear cover - it was all the Stones office had from the tour at that time. He does not know where the photos were taken. When asked about the unique architecture of the rear cover Thomas had this to say, "At that time we were heavily engaged in working with an iconic female fashion brand, Biba - particularly their cosmetic units, in a neo-art deco manner. The layout of the cover is virtually identical to the back board of one of these units, by necessity."

The back cover features song titles and credits with photographs of the group in performance. In the upper corners of the photo collage is a single crowd shot that was reworked by Thomas from the top oval photo of Jagger with the crowd in its background. The top level of shots are of Jagger, Jagger and Wyman. The second layer is Watts, Jagger and Wyman. Taylor, Jagger, Watts, and Richards fill the third level, with Richards and Taylor anchoring the collage. All the photos were taken from the 1969 American tour.

Thomas turned the work around in a short 48 hours to meet Decca's deadline for the album's release. He received Jagger's seal of approval at the Monday presentation of the cover when he told Thomas, "I really dig your artwork, man." Some of the details are very loose. The Rolling Stones' 1970 live album *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!* Was one of Thomas's first commissions.



Asked, what should I have asked that I did not, Thomas replied, "Why did they ruin the design and layout for the CD cover? Dunno. Vandalism." He has a point. If you enjoy album art, always go for the original vinyl if it is an option.

Fantasy Explanation

An album cover is one of the first ways we perceive a body of music or a band. It can tie the songs together, create a theme, a mood, or an impression. It can make a statement of the band's intent. It can help make or further the band's image. The Stones and nearly everyone else began with posed studio shots of the band. Album

covers eventually became an important part of the culture of music and artistic statements themselves. Album art is a cultural expression. Gatefold covers, inserts, and lyric sheets could make the album cover a desirable work in its own right. The cover gives listeners something to look at while they learn the music, it can provide clues about the inspirations behind the music or it can fuel a fan's fantasies. Sometimes they are just an obtuse series of nonsensical, random images.

When I first saw *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!* I felt the way Charlie looks. I like to think this was what Charlie spontaneously did when he learned the 1969 American tour became official. Leaping for joy to be back on the road again, he has grabbed the band's equipment and has hit the road, the boys will catch up, eventually. It had been 935 days between the last show of their 1967 European Tour and the first show of the 1969 tour. All Stones fans were leaping for joy, it had been 1,198 days since the Stones were last in the US. The selection of songs, the live vibe, "...they're called the fantastic five, the greatest rock and roll band in the world, The Rolling Stones," all right there in Charlie's leap for joy.



John Kosh, Steven Thomas, Michael Berkofsky, David Bailey, Keith Richards and Domonique Tarle, Bill Wyman and Ethan Russell

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